

## Ministry and Family in Time of War



*We recently had the wonderful privilege of leading a marriage retreat for couples from our church in L'viv.*

There are days when things appear almost peaceful. We move about the city, living what seems a normal life, and we almost forget that there's a war on. Then the sirens go off again, reminding us why we pray for peace and liberty in Ukraine.

Thankfully, L'viv remains one of the safer areas of Ukraine right now, and God has been faithful to protect our lives and property. We have lost so little compared to many, and the Lord continues to guide and bless us. In this (admittedly overdue) report, we'd like to share with you a glimpse into our family and ministry in this difficult time of war.

### Fall Marriage Retreat

In January of 2023, while we were still in Slovakia, our church from L'viv contacted us with a request: would Kelsie and I travel back into Ukraine to lead a marriage seminar? We agreed, and preparations began in earnest.

Then, just a few weeks before the seminar was scheduled, rumors began to swirl of a new invasion from Belorussian territory, which is only a few hundred kilometers north of L'viv. People were suddenly forced anew to make decisions about whether or not to flee the country in the face of foreign aggression. It was decided that, given this new looming threat, now was not the time to gather for a seminar, and the event was canceled.

In the end, the northern invasion never materialized, and today, it seems highly unlikely that the Russians will be able to mount any kind of ground invasion from the north for the foreseeable future.

Several months passed, and as you likely know already, our family made the decision to return to Ukraine. We've been here now for over six months, and for the record, we are more confident than ever that coming home to Ukraine was the right choice.

Time passed, and the wife of one of our pastors approached us again about the possibility of revisiting the marriage seminar. This time it would be a couples retreat in the Carpathian Mountains, just a few hours south of L'viv. We again agreed, and again began to prepare.

The event was held in November, and while the focus was on couples, we all brought our kiddos as well. God blessed, and we had a warm and memorable time of fellowship, teaching, games, and even Ukrainian barbecue!

Preparing for the event posed an interesting challenge for Kelsie and me. For one thing, many of the couples in our church have been married for as long or longer than we have. These are not marriage newbies, and many of them could teach a marriage seminar themselves! There were also some younger couples, as well as some wives who attended alone. One such was a woman named Nadia, who ministered with our team this summer. She came to the retreat alone because her husband has been fighting the Russians since war broke out nearly two years ago.

With all these things in mind, we decided to take a slightly different approach to our content. We based our presentation on a fantastic article entitled *Seven Pearls for Finding a Happy Marriage*, written by none other than our own mentors, Michael and Debi Pearl.

As an aside, I remember being a single man and spending time with Mike and Debi. As I watched the two of them interact, I was inspired. Their actions demonstrated that they were not just spouses, but best friends. I said to myself, "When I get married, that's the kind of relationship I want to have with my wife."

Fast-forward nearly 20 years, and it was a privilege to be able to share some of the Pearls' wisdom with our church here. Of course, Kelsie and I mixed in plenty of our own

testimonies and thoughts, as well as wisdom we've gleaned from our parents. Kelsie did a wonderful job planning some couples games, and these turned out to be a real hit!

I think more than anything else, I was personally blessed to see these husbands and wives *together*. One of our games called for couples to play as a team and sort Skittles into bowls by color. The challenge was that they could only use one hand each. With their other arm, they had to embrace their spouse. It was silly and fun and everyone got a good laugh. But as I stood to the side, watching these married friends of mine, I almost teared up. I was filled with joy to see them embracing, to see them laughing, to see them *together*.



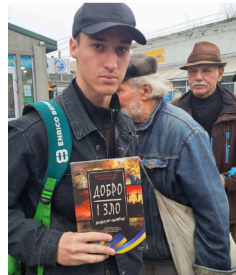
Are you married? Go hug your spouse today, and tell them that you will never, ever leave. *"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."* (Mark 10:9)

## Family Life

I sometimes look around at my family and think, "These are the golden years." We are together, we are safe, we are growing and learning and doing our best to share Christ in the land of Ukraine.

Abigail continues to thrive in her new life in Houston. We don't know how long she'll be there, but for this season, we believe this is God's direction for her.

Back in Ukraine, we now have one extra seat in the van! Our next eldest daughters, Rebekah and Hosanna, are growing into lovely, very responsible young ladies. I feel more like Potiphar all the time: I'm surrounded by competent people who run my household better than I ever could!



Kathryn, David, and Mia ("the Littles") are getting bigger all the time. Mia, our youngest, is now four, and we are reminded to savor every moment of these tender years. Truly children are *His* heritage.

If you're reading the print version of this newsletter, be sure to visit our blog for all the latest photos that we can't fit here!

## Good and Evil Outreach

One of our core ministries continues to be our *Good and Evil* distribution program. As of this writing, we have over 80 registered distributors working to get the *Good and Evil* book into the hands of Ukrainians. Some of our distributors are quite active, coming back to us again and again for resupply.

Since Russia invaded Ukraine in early 2022, we have given away over 11,000 copies of *Good and Evil*. Often, our distributors send us pictures of their work — far too many to share here — and we've included some highlights on our blog!

## How You Can Pray

- Praise the Lord for an encouraging and successful marriage retreat. Pray that He would continue to strengthen marriages in our church and yours.
- Pray that God would continue to open doors for us to preach the Gospel through avenues such as the *Good and Evil* program, *Bible First Online*, and others.
- Pray for our teammates, the Day family, who are returning to Ukraine on March 1! We are super excited to have them back!
- Pray for health, wisdom and courage for our family.
- Pray for peace and liberty in Ukraine.

*To God be the Glory*